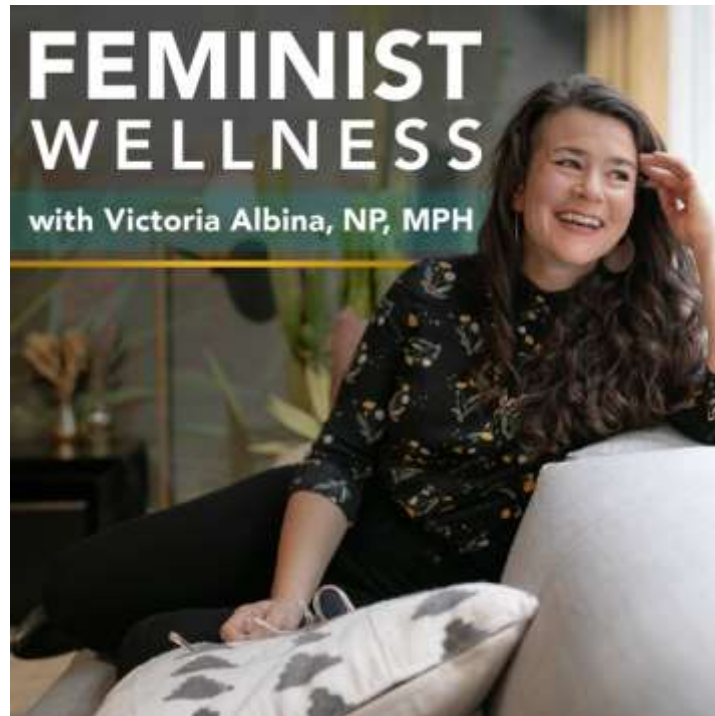


Ep #78: Minimum Baseline Thinking



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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When you have the thought habit of perfectionism, it's so delightful to your brain to make grandiose and enormous plans to change your entire life in one fell swoop. And if that worked, I'd be all about it, but science, my love. My nerdy, nerdy, love.

Telling yourself you're going to take a barre class daily when you haven't exercised in the last year, write that quarantine novel you've been meaning to work on for a decade in the course of a week, eat only organic non-processed gluten-free foods delivered to your doorstep by angels riding swans, read self-help books every evening instead of watching TV ever, never ever drink coffee or alcohol or eat sugar, set amazing boundaries and uphold them 110% of the time, never worry, never feel anxious, and you are going to do it all at the same time.

Wow, that is a recipe for perfectionist brain explosion, which of course is a scientific term. And it's just not realistic. It's a perfectionist thought fantasy. It's what perfectionism does to your brain, makes you think you have to create and follow through on these massive plans or you failed in a bad way, before you've even started, which of course means you're a bad person, so why even start again?

Today, we're calling BS on that old thought error, and we're talking about the remedy. The minimum baseline. Intrigued? Ready to make lasting change from a place of self-love? Keep listening, my sweet one. It's going to be a good one.

You're listening to Feminist Wellness, the only podcast that combines functional medicine, life coaching, and feminism to teach smart women how to reclaim their power and restore their health! Here's your host, Nurse Practitioner, Functional Medicine Expert, Herbalist and Life Coach, Victoria Albina.

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Hello, hello my love. I hope this finds you doing so well. I'm working on a bunch of exciting projects over here, including preparing to bring my amazing six-month online small-group, high-touch life coaching course, The Feminist Wellness Guide to Overcoming Codependency to you all again this fall.

We'll be starting in late September, which is so exciting because I love teaching and coaching and bringing my 20 years of experience in health and wellness to helping you overcome your codependent, perfectionist, and people-pleasing thought habits, so you can live life with intention.

Babe, it's such a great program, and it's getting better each day. The upcoming class, it's not even starting for a while and there are already several people in it, which is very exciting. So if you want a spot, head on over to victoriaalbina.com/masterclass. Learn more about it and there is a short application you can fill out there to get on a call with me to talk more about the program to see if you'd be a good fit, et cetera.

So as I work on all of these projects, I can hear my inner perfectionist saying, "Vic, you has to do it all, all at once, perfectly, today. Not only work on the projects but do all of your self-care and take care of the house and take care of your clients. All of it perfectly today."

Oh, brains. And I know from experience and because science, that just doesn't work. It's neither a loving way to talk to myself nor an efficient way to actually get anything done because it leads to that wildly unuseful - some would say useless, but that feeling known as overwhelm.

So today, let's talk about what does work. The remedy. The antidote. Minimum baseline thinking. A minimum baseline is the least amount of anything that you are willing to do on the daily towards a goal you've set and to shift your goal for now away from the lofty end product, to focus on what really matters. Trusting yourself.

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The reason why this practice matters is because us folks with codependent, people pleasing, and perfectionist thought habits love to make unrealistic plans, to commit to things we don't want to do and to either follow through to attempt to please someone else or never follow through when that plan involves taking care of us.

The problem with this habit is that it erodes your trust in yourself. By setting lofty and unreachable goals and then failing to meet them time and again, you teach yourself again and again that you are not a person you can rely on for big or little things, and that just stinks my tender heart.

When we break this habit of overcommitting to others and under-committing to ourselves, we can start to meet our goals, to build our self-love and self-trust and to live the wildly intentional life we each dream of.

Another vital thing to note is that every time you semi-commit and don't follow through, it's like a kick in the shins for your self-esteem. Because your ego gets involved and makes that commitment you're not really committed to mean something about you, which as you know from listening to these podcasts, is so far from the truth.

The issue here isn't that you lack discipline or motivation or that you're just worthless. The problem here, my darling perfectionist, is that your thoughts are tying your value as a human, your self-regard, and self-esteem to your actions on an unreasonable plan.

So we start by disarticulating that, breaking that false link between your doings and your being, which we dove into in episode 21. And if the concept of self-regard is a new one for you, you can learn all about it in episode 65, which is all about self-confidence and in episode 50, positive self-regard.

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So let's do what we do. Let's pause to breathe in and out. And now, a wee reminder from my heart right to yours, you are perfect, amazing, incredible. You are whole and worthy of love and care and kindness right now. This millisecond, exactly as you are. There is nothing you need to change or do differently for that to be a true fact.

I'll invite you to pause this recording, get out a pen and paper, and write that gem out a bunch of times. I am perfect and lovable and worthy. And I don't have to do anything to prove it ever. I'll wait.

So my love, in comes the concept of the minimum baseline. This is a technique that helps you to see that perfect doesn't exist, grandiose plans don't serve you, and that commitment and consistency to small achievable and meaningful goals are truly what gets you to where you want to go, valuing yourself and building trust in and with yourself along the way.

How beautiful is that? So let's get into the details of this plan I'm proposing, my sweet nerds who love details and algorithm, a protocol, a plan. The minimum daily baseline is a commitment you make to the smallest, tiniest thing in lots of detail.

Doing a tiny thing each day with commitment, with enthusiasm and gusto is huge, despite what your ego might try to tell you. And that's where thought work and learning to manage your adult mind and reparent your beautiful inner children comes in on the daily. Things we've talked about here so often, my beauty.

So your minimum baseline is a tiny thing you commit to. Not I'm going to create my whole website, but I will sit at my desk each morning and will work on one section of my website at a time for 10 minutes a day, creating a draft.

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This can also look like focusing on changing your view of yourself directly. Say you want to work on a habit like your alcohol consumption. You might start out with a minimum of committing to one day a week when you don't drink. Do that. And you can start thinking of yourself as a non-drinker on that one day.

Say you're someone who doesn't uphold their boundaries. You can start to think of yourself as someone who does by asking yourself what you truly want and need once a day, on a schedule, as a practice. And you can feel into what your perfect body teaches you, tells you, lets you know about your wants and needs.

If you want to start a practice of daily meditation, mindfulness, thought work, future self planning, episode nine is all about it, it starts with a commitment to a minimum baseline. Doing these things for five minutes a day, any time of day, but pick a time of day and commit to it.

And my beauty, it is just as important that you set the five-minute timer and you stop when that bell goes off. The goal here is to build trust in yourself. Not to go over what you promised yourself you would do because your brain will start to rebel against those five minutes soon enough if you let them turn into 20.

So right now, let's take a minute together to breathe, to feel into your body. Deep belly breath in and slow out. Perhaps you put a hand on your heart, maybe one of the back of your neck. Listen to the feedback your body is giving you about a starting place for a minimum baseline.

Are there some goals you've been meaning to get a start on? A practice you want to start? A habit you'd like to shift out of your life? Take some inhaled and then slow thoughtful exhaled like we do, and let the ideas, images, and sensations come up.

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If you'd like, you can jot down some of your ideas and make working on them the first minimum baseline you commit to. Now, your brain may jump into analysis paralysis, which we talked about way back in episode eight. Your brain may start thinking of four billion things you could possibly choose, and this is where you get to constrain your thoughts.

Don't let your brain run away with you thinking about the most perfect thing to commit to. We are working to rewrite those stories, and we're working on being decisive. Making strong decisions and going with it.

So pick a thing. It really doesn't matter. But pick it and make sure you want to work towards, but just pick it. Once you've decided on the minimum baseline that you're committing to, the first step is committing to working on the one you just committed to. Not rewriting it again and again.

And then you get to determine what the first step of that commitment is. Is it getting your workout clothes on? Meditating or journaling for five minutes a day? Sitting down at your desk every day at the same time? Peeing every time you feel the need? Honoring your hunger or thirst? Going for a walk for five minutes a day? Doing your thought work when your brain says, nah, Netflix?

Is it getting a pen in your hand and opening your journal? Is it pouring a glass of water and drinking it first thing in the morning? Putting your beautiful face in the sunshine for two minutes a day? Making a commitment to getting outside, whatever capacity you have for that, for seven minutes a day?

Whatever it is, pick one thing. Yup, just the one. Oh my gosh, how much does your brain hate that? But really, even just saying it, my brain is like, but I can do all of the things at the same time. Oh brains. My beauty, that's the practice. Picking the one thing, honoring the part of your brain that's

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like, freaking out, giving it love, and letting it know that it can just lovingly hush.

Not like a mean hush, but like, brain, thank you, I got this. The plan is just the one. And in that, you can remember, it's crucial that we commit to our minimum baseline, not for the number of nights gone without buffering with alcohol or whatever your favorite buffer is. Mine is overthinking, for the record.

Not for the number of conversations had without devolving into insults or petty arguments, not for the number of mornings started with self-reflection or body-loving, body-affirming movement, which is hopefully the only kind you are doing, my darling, but rather, for the sake of honoring your commitment to yourself, for the sake of doing what you said you were going to do.

This switch is the emphasis from doing it because of what it will do for you, to doing it for you. Because of who you are becoming in the process. When your energy is moving towards something, you harness the power of your internal motivation, knowing motivation is a feeling caused by your thoughts.

And you harness the power of your psyche, your inner champion, and like you have an inner protector, we all have champion parts who want us to succeed. And of course, you harness that cutie pie of a prefrontal cortex to drive you because the energy of moving towards what you want, moving towards self-love and self-trust is what will continue to keep you focused when it gets challenging. Much more than moving away from energy ever will.

So that is I am focused on, I am committed to writing in my journal for five minutes a day, versus I'm not going to spend my mornings scrolling the internet wildly and with reckless abandon. So the former is moving towards

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energy. I'm moving towards my goal. And the latter, I'm not going to do this, I am moving away from in my energy, and I highly recommend you try on the former. See how it works for you.

My beauty, we must learn how to love and overcome our own discomfort by honoring it. By honoring our own word to ourselves and thus, to follow through, regardless of whether you're going to get a pat on the head or praise or thank you or acknowledgment from others. All of that external validation that we are so desperate for will never keep you moving forward on the path to true self-love and self-trust.

And the deep desire and baby, I have felt it. I feel it still sometimes. It is natural and normal, particularly coming from a family with codependency, perfectionism, people pleasing, that desire for external validation is why so many of us struggle with our own discipline, our own follow through, our own motivation, our own integrity.

Because we have been conditioned not only to work for gold stars, but also to believe that any activity without a measurable, tangible, externally observable result isn't really worth doing. Washing the dishes, you can see that is done and someone may say, "Thank you for doing that. You did that well."

Versus taking the time to reparent and speak sweetly to your inner ones, no one sees that. No one gives you a good girl for that. You get to learn how to give that gold star to yourself, knowing we have not been conditioned to show up for ourselves, simply because we want to be consistent in achieving something over the long-term.

And so you get to do what we do in this family. You get to pause, breathe into it, align your thought work, your circumstance, thought, feeling, action, result, align yourself with your own goal for your own life.

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And the secondary bonus to remember is that when your minimum baseline is to stretch your body for five minutes a day, and sure, it can be while you're watching TV, that's totally fine, you're doing so much more for yourself than you were when you created all those grandiose, perfectionist plans to exercise for an hour a day that you never carried out.

And when you commit to this minimum daily baseline, this five minutes of stretching or movement or whatever each day, or twice a week, whatever it is for you, let's be real, you won't have all those fancy Spandex stretch pants taunting you every time you open your closet, reminding you of what a failure you are and how much guilt and shame you should be carrying for not carrying through on the original and rather silly plan.

Instead, you can remember that you're building slow and steady trust with you. You're doing one small thing and you're doing it and doing it and doing it well. That's what truly matters. Also, I think I'm getting cheesier each episode. It's my truth, babies.

Through this process, you are learning how to honor your own plans, even if you're not getting rewarded in the immediate, even if you're not getting that validation from others. So, my beautiful overachievers, listen up. You get to make your minimum baseline ridiculously easy. Easier than easy.

And yes, your brain will tell you it's not enough, that you need to do more, that you shouldn't even bother doing something so simple. Your brain and body will object because these tiny commitments won't give you a dopamine hit, and my nerds, you know your brain and body loves a good dopamine hit.

I mean, who doesn't? And sweet one, that's okay. I mean, it's uncomfortable for sure. It's a big change from trying to do all of the things all of the time, but you can do hard things until they feel less hard, which they eventually do.

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So make sure you take that first step and be willing to continue on and honor that minimum baseline to and for yourself, remembering no one's forcing you, no one's imposing this on you. You are choosing it for you. For no one else. Because you are worth taking care of. How beautiful is that?

And to answer a common question, before you even send me a DM, yes, you can increase or shift upwards your minimum baseline as you increase your ability to honor your commitment to yourself. Once five minutes of daily journaling or movement or whatever it is feels easy enough, once you've strung together enough instances of meeting your own goal, showing yourself you are trustworthy, go to six minutes, add another day. Heck, go to seven.

That's not really what matters. It's not the length of time or the number of days. It's making the commitment and sticking to it. The commitment comes first. That is your foundation.

And know this; at the end of the week, month, year, if all you do is uphold your boundaries for five minutes during a conversation, if all you do is not take calls during your focus time or relaxation time, if all you do is decide to not drink for one night each week, if all you do is write circumstance, thought, feeling, action, result, CTFAR, on a piece of paper and do your thought work for five minutes a day, you will experience yourself as a different person.

You will have completely transformed your relationship with yourself. And from there, you can make new commitments and trust in yourself that you will follow through with them from a place of self-love. Because this is self-love. Showing up for yourself on the daily to do one teeny tiny thing.

I can't really think of anything that is a more powerful way to show yourself love than that. And that is the biggest goal and the most fulfilling goal there is, my sweet, perfect, and beautiful love.

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Thank you for listening to this week's episode of *Feminist Wellness*. If you like what you've heard, head to VictoriaAlbina.com to learn more.